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THE SOUL'S DESTROYER AND OTHER POEMS

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~~W. H. Davies~~  
THE SOUL'S DESTROYER  
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WILLIAM H. DAVIES

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## THE SOUL'S DESTROYER

London! What utterance the mind finds here!  
In its academy of art, more rich  
Than that proud temple which made Ophir poor,  
And the resources famed of Sheba's Queen.  
And its museums, hoarding up the past,  
With their rare bones of animals extinct;  
And woven stuffs embroidered by the East  
Ere other hemispheres could know that Peace  
Had trophies pleasanter to win than War;  
The great man, wrought to very life in stone—  
Of genius, that raises spirits that  
It cannot lay until their will is wrought—  
Till in their eyes we seek to wander awed,  
Lost in the mind's immensity, to find  
The passage barred, the spirit gone away.  
And not without sweet sounds to hear: as I  
Have heard the music, like a hiding child,  
Low chuckling its delight behind a wall,  
Which, with a sudden burst and joyous cry,  
Out leapt and on my heart threw its sweet weight—  
When strolling in the palace-bounded parks  
Of our great city on a summer's morn.  
Now, one who lives for long in London town  
Doth feel his love divided 'tween the two—  
A city's noise and Nature's quiet call:



His heart is as a mother's, that can hear  
Voices of absent children o'er the sea  
Calling to her, and children's words at home.  
E'en when old Thames rolls in his fog, and men  
Are lost, and only blind men know their way ;  
When Morning borrows of the Evening's lamps,  
Or when bewildered millions battle home  
With stifled throats, and eyes that burn with pain—  
Still are there lovers faithful to such moods.  
But in thy slums, where I have seen men gaunt,  
In their vile prisons where they wander starved  
Without a jailer for their common needs—  
Heard children whimper to their mother's moan ;  
Where rich ones, had they love, with willing hands,  
Have privilege to win their godhead soon  
By charity that's needless in new realms—  
Oh, who can love thy slums with starving ones !  
Where children live, like flowers in Ocean's dells,  
Unvisited by light or balmy wind :  
As daffodils, that plead with their sweet smiles  
Our charity for their rude father March.  
Thy place is in the slums, O Charity,  
These are thy churches for thy visitings ;  
The charity that seeks is nobler far  
Than charity that must at home be sought.  
This London served my life for full five years.  
viii.

In sheer disgust to know intemperance  
And poverty, and leaning to the sot  
Who lays this precious intellect to sleep,  
As though no beauty was in all the world,  
With heaven and earth scarce worthy of a thought,  
And helpless grown of every future joy—  
Methought return to Nature might restore  
Youth's early peace and faith's simplicity.  
Though Hope be an illusion, yet our life  
Were never so bewildered as without it ;  
An April day of sunny promises  
When we are suffering actual cold and want,  
And child of Discontent—without such hints  
Of coming joy Life's name were Vanity.  
Hopeless had I become, a wreck of men ;  
A derelict that neither sinks nor floats,  
Is drifting out of sight of heaven and earth,  
Not of the ways of men, but *in* their ways.  
And there lived one, now to another wed,  
Whom I had secret wish to look upon,  
With sweet remembrance of our earlier years.  
Her presence then a pool of deep repose  
To break Life's dual run from Innocence  
To Manhood, and from Manhood unto Age,  
And a sweet pause for all my murmuring ;  
Until a way, for which is no account,

Set me to run again, and she received  
Into her favour one who was my friend.  
Oft had I mourned those days for ever gone  
We went together side by side to school,  
Together had our holidays in fields  
Made golden by June's buttercups ; in woods,  
Where under ferns fresh pulled I buried her,  
And called her forth like Lazarus from the grave ;  
She'd laughing come, to shake her curls until  
Methought to hear full half a hundred bells.  
A grown-up world took playful notice soon,  
Made me feel shame that grew a greater love ;  
She was more chary of her laughter then,  
And more subdued her voice, as soft and sweet  
As Autumn's, blowing through his golden reeds.  
In her sweet sympathies she was a woman  
When scarcely she was more than child in years ;  
And yet one angry moment parted us,  
And days of longing never joined us more.

One morning I awoke with lips gone dry,  
The tongue an obstacle to choke the throat,  
And aching body weighted with more heads  
Than Pluto's dog ; the features hard and set,  
As though encased in a plaster cast ;  
With limbs all sore through falling here and there



To drink the various ales the Borough kept  
From London Bridge to Newington, and streets  
Adjoining, alleys, lanes obscure from them,  
Then thought of home and of the purer life,  
Of Nature's air, and having room to breathe,  
A sunny sky, green field, and water's sound ;  
Of peaceful rivers not yet fretful grown  
As when their mouths have tasted Ocean's salt ;  
And where the rabbits sit amid their ferns,  
Or leap, to flash the white of their brown tails.  
Less time a grey crow picks the partridge clean,  
I was appalled, and, with impulse that  
Was wonderful in one of many sprees,  
Went onward rapidly from street to street.  
I still had vision clear of Nature's face,  
Though muddled in my senses to the ways  
And doings of the days and nights before.  
I heard the city roaring like a beast  
That's wronged by one that feared an open strife  
And triumphed by his cunning—as I walked.  
It followed on for hours with rushing sound,  
As some great cataract had burst all bounds  
And was oncoming with its mingled pines—  
The fallen sentinels—to choke the sea.  
Once in awhile the sound, though not less near,  
Seemed distant, barred by dwellings closely joined,

But at a corner's turn heard full again ;  
Yet lessened soon and sure to softer ways  
Of a low murmuring—as though it found  
Anger was vain, and coaxed for my return.  
All day walked I, and that same night, I scorned  
The shelter of a house, lay peaceful down  
Beneath the glorious stars ; beneath that nest  
Of singing stars men call the Milky Way ;  
Thought it, maybe, the way that spirits take,  
And heavenly choir to sing triumphal march  
For dead men for the New Jerusalem.  
I was alone : had left the Borough in  
Safe care of my old cronies, who would keep  
Its reputation from becoming changed  
Into a quiet neighbourhood.

As with a shipwrecked seaman cast ashore,  
And carried to a land's interior  
By the rude natives, there to work and slave  
Quarries and mines of their barbaric king ;  
Who after years escapes his servitude  
To wander lost, at last to see before  
Him mountains which he climbs to see beyond,  
When on their top he stands—beholds the sea !  
And, wonders more, a fleet of friendly flags  
Lying at anchor for his signalling—  
xii.

Such joy a hundred times a day was mine  
To see at every bend of the road the face  
Of Nature different. And oft I sat  
To hear the lark from his first twitter pass  
To greater things as he soared nearer heaven ;  
Or to the throstle, singing nearer home,  
With less of that abandon and wild fire,  
But steady, like a sheltered light from wind.  
What joy was mine, sweet Nature, to return !  
The flower so wild, reared on thine own pure milk  
Of dew and rain, and by thy sunbeams warmed,  
Speckled the green with light of various hues ;  
The hawthorn it caught slippery Mercury,  
And smothered him to smell of where he'd been ;  
And everything that had a voice made sound,  
The speechless things were gladsome in dumb smiles.  
It was a day of rest in heaven, which seemed  
A blue grass field thick dotted with white tents  
Which Life slept late in, as 'twere holiday.  
Yon lord or squire in his great house,  
Who himself busies guessing all his days  
The age of horses and the weight of hogs,  
The breed of hounds—not such as he has held  
The ear to Nature's quiet heart-beat. No ;  
He overlooks the flower to spy the fox,  
Ignores the lark's song for the halloing horn,



Nor hears the echo of that horn he loves—  
Not such as he is rich in Nature's stores.  
I've seen proud Autumn in more gold arrayed,  
Ere cold October strips and blows him bare,  
Than ever delved from earth or ta'en from water's wash ;  
More pearls seen scattered to a summer's morn  
Than Ocean e'er possessed in depths or out,  
Though in his water's workshop—like a slave.  
Who sees a cobweb strung with dew pearls, sees  
A finer work than jewelled crowns of gold.  
Few are thy friends, sweet Nature, in these days,  
But thou art still the Solitary's love.  
The glory of the river's long since gone,  
The land is sped and beauty unrevealed.  
The motor-car goes humming down the road,  
Like some huge bee that warns us from its way.  
On, on, we speed by fire on slippery rails,  
And earth goes spinning back from whence we came,  
And through the trees, or on the hills' smooth tops  
That cut the heaven clean—the day's one orb  
Goes with us till he sinks before the dark,  
Clouds towering with him, to his back and front ;  
We speed our way through tunnels under ground,  
Where one sees naught but faces of his kind.  
Let others praise thy parts, sweet Nature ; I  
Who cannot know the barley from the oats,

Nor call the bird by note, nor name a star,  
Claim thy heart's fulness through the face of things.  
The lonely shepherd in his hut at night  
Will dream of Beauty in the feverous towns,  
Of Love and Gaiety, of Song and Dance ;  
With fore-paws on his master's crook, the dog  
Sleeps dreaming his life's duty—though his flocks  
Are countless, and the hills on which they roam :  
So faithful I to thee, like shepherd's dog,  
To follow thee with joy in all thy moods,  
As docile as the lamb that Una led.  
When man shall stand apart from this dear world,  
And have his vision's manifold increase,  
To see it rolled at morning when the sun  
Makes lamps of domes and lighthouses of fanes,  
With its green fields, blue waters, and its hills,  
And smiling valleys filled with brooks and flowers ;  
To hear the music of the world once his,  
Singing in unison with other spheres—  
He shall exclaim, " I have God's second heaven  
Ere I have known the wonder of His first."

Six days had gone, and I at length near home,  
Where toil the Cymry deep in sunless pits,  
And emptying all their hills to warm the world.  
Soon saw familiar scenes, and saw no change :

The rookery, where never silence seemed—  
For every hour seemed it to be disturbed  
By strange new-comers, aliens to invade ;  
Or, maybe, known ones bringing envied stores  
Which stay-at-homes would clamour to divide.  
And near that rookery a river ran,  
And over it a bridge too small for piers ;  
Another crossing, of irregular stones,  
Was seen, which in the springtime flooded o'er ;  
And I had heard the river tell their number,  
And spell—like letters of an alphabet,  
That it would never tire repeating day  
And night. When young I oft had bared my feet  
To go from bank to bank, leapt stone to stone,  
My ankles wetted on a sunken one.  
Beyond the bridge was seen the village spire—  
My courage failed. I feared to see in life  
Her who was now the heroine of dreams,  
And sweet familiar of my solitude  
And silence, and whose shadowy hand kept full  
The cup of memory ; and in such mood  
Entered an inn, to seek that courage which  
Makes man abuse his friends, and wish them foes ;  
Or puts unnatural pity in his mind  
To help strange ones, forgetful of his own.  
Not one known face had met my own, or voice  
xvi.

To recognise, until that moment came ;  
And then such sight to see that had the man  
Been other than he was had not surprised :  
He who had wed my love stood shaking there  
While to his lips another held the glass  
Which his own hand lacked power to raise unspilled ;  
And there stood he, in manner of a beast  
That's drinking from a trough, but more the greed.  
We greeted as old friends ; few moments passed  
When I inquired of her, in casual way,  
On which a fearful change came over him :  
“ Why, she hath filled the house with merry men  
To mock her husband,” he replied, and turned  
His head in fear. And well I knew his thoughts,  
And of such demons in a drunkard's dream,  
The sleepless dream that wearies flesh and brain.  
This curse of drink, in village and in town,  
The curse of nations, their decline and fall,  
Ere they can question purpose of this life ;  
And so 'twill be until the mind is reared  
To see the beauty that is in the world,  
Of science, art, and Nature at all times ;  
To know that temperance and sobriety  
Is truer joy—e'en though the grave ends all—  
Than an unnatural merriment that brings  
A thousand tortures for its hundred joys.



He now seemed worse and moved about the room,  
And many a sound of triumph, anguish made,  
Though from his unseen foes receiving knocks  
And giving in return. We stood in awe !  
One looked at me and said : " He should be home,  
And we are much to blame for him ; wouldst thou  
See him safe there ? for none can censure thee."  
"Nay, I would rather tread his threshold floor,  
And dare all devils of his fancy there,  
Than front his wife and children innocent."  
As some lone hunter might at sunrise see,  
Upon the margent of a woodland pool,  
Huge prints of something alien to his lore,  
And know not if 'twere fowl or beast, or freak  
Of man—so awed, amazed I stood ; until  
He grew more calm, and then we coaxed him home.

We reached his home, a cottage lone and small  
And such a place was my ideal to live,  
Where I might walk it round, touch its four sides,  
Free to the sun in every latitude,  
Unto the first and final look on earth.  
And at its door three little Aprils played,  
Three little children, little Aprils all,  
So full were they of April's strife and love ;  
Who, when they saw us coming, ran to meet us,  
xviii.

To make a bridal entry with their laughter ;  
But saw a stranger, and their father cold,  
Fell back, and followed hushed, a funeral train.  
Sure, thought I, our whole duty is to leave  
Our children's state exalted 'bove our own :  
Equipping them with kinder thoughts than ours,  
And they do likewise in their day ; so through  
The generations to at last attain  
The climax of our mortal purity.  
Had I so failed to these poor little ones  
If she and I were sharing of their lives !  
We entered, and we stood before her face,  
And it was stern, as woe affects the man,  
Not that sweet resignation of her sex.  
She looked on me as one unjustly served,  
A look regretful, part resigned, as if  
Some retribution was my right to claim.  
Her once blue sapphire eyes had not a gleam,  
As they would never smile or weep again,  
And had no light to draw the waters up  
Which staled upon her heart. To me all seemed  
So plain : that she had loved without avail,  
And reasoned, then had widowed her own self,  
A widowhood in which Death claimed no part.  
All night he raved, and in his madness died.  
And I have seen his death-look on a beast

Baring the teeth 'twas powerless to use  
Against a foe of greater strength, and there  
Lay dead, intentions hatefully revealed.  
Such his dread look : the vicious show of teeth  
Made bare in hatred to his unseen foes.  
Such is this drink that fathers half our sins ;  
It makes a simple one responsible  
For deeds which memory makes no count to save,  
And proves man guilty in his innocence.  
When he shall stand before his judging God  
He needs must answer charges strange to him  
And his own mind—to One who sees all things ;  
And what He sees, He never can forget.  
May God have mercy on our frailties !  
Sure we, though set a thousand years of pain,  
Nor once should murmur at vicissitude,  
Yet ill deserve those promises fulfilled  
Of an eternity of bliss with Him ;  
And who can know the thoughts of him in hell,  
Who sacrificed eternity of joy  
To gratify this little life on earth !  
Were't not for God Almighty's mercy, trees  
Would 'scape the thunderbolt, th' unfeeling rocks  
The lightning's blast ; all ills would fall on man,  
Who hides his conscience in a covered cage,  
As dumb and silent as a moulting bird.

## LOVE'S COMING

An hour or more she's gone,  
And we are left alone,  
I and her bird.

At last he twittered sweet,  
To hear my loved one's feet,  
And I, too, heard.

When she had entered,  
He tilted then his head,  
If right or wrong ;  
But when her voice was heard  
A frenzy seized the bird  
To rave in song.

" Peace, pet, my love is near,  
Her voice I cannot hear  
In such a din ;  
Thou couldst not call more loud  
Unto a smiling cloud  
That May hides in."

Now, what his thoughts could be—  
If she still spake and he  
In harmony ;  
Or had forgetful grown,  
Enamoured of his own  
Sweet melody—



Is not my say ; I know  
I out with her must go  
To hear her story.  
We left that raving thing—  
Made worse by laughter—sing  
Out his mad glory.

## IN A LODGING HOUSE

“Get to thy room,” a voice told me,  
“From sottish lips in blasphemy” ;  
And I said this : “If I go there,  
Silence will send me to Despair ;  
Then my weak What I Am will be  
Mocked by that one I wish to be ;  
And leeches of regret will lie  
On me to palely stupefy,  
Close sucking at my heart’s content ”—  
Yet I arose, to my room went.  
I knew’t : scarce off my garments were  
When came the funeral gathering there  
To bury my dead hopes, as night  
By night to mock my Fancy’s sight.  
There was a meeting-house adjoined,  
Where rich ones, rare and few of kind,  
Fed little children, came to cheer  
Parents with music sweet to hear.  
While now I grieved a real voice stole  
Into my room, and sang this soul  
To heaven from hell, though I knew well  
Silence would drift it back to hell  
When that sweet sound was heard no more.  
She sang to me a chanted shore  
Where seamajds’ dripping tresses spread

And made the rocks gold carpeted ;  
She sang me back to childhood's way,  
To fields with lambs to see at play,  
And sheep that coughed like men. Again  
I saw quaint treasures of the main,  
Dried fishes, model ships, and shells,  
And coral stalks, and seaweed bells,  
In my grandfather's house. Ah ! sweet  
To bear his boast through school and street—  
“ Master of my own ship was I.”  
Again I heard his footsteps nigh,  
As to and fro the passage dark  
He walked, as though on his own bark ;  
When granny, I, a sister, brother,  
Huddled under cosy cover.  
Now have I lived my score and ten,  
Yet less my hope than older men.  
No collier bowelled in the earth  
But Hope shall flush with rosy breath ;  
No seaman drowning in the main,  
Nor traveller perished on a plain,  
Where all is silent, and the wind  
Prowls day and night in vain to find  
A living thing to make a moan,  
Or mountaineer was lost—nay, none  
Of these but Hope makes less afraid,

And flatters to some call for aid.  
Yet here lives one a score and ten,  
And less his hope than older men.  
I cared not for that singer's grace,  
If plain she were or fair of face,  
Or what her station, age might be—  
She was a Voice, no more to me,  
But such an one, so sweet and fresh,  
I made no judgment on her flesh.  
It seemed a spirit there to float,  
Alighting with such raptured note  
That it must ease its heart of. Oh,  
Woman ; thy sweet voice none others know  
As those to whom thou'rt seldom heard ;  
Who have no flower to tend, no bird  
For pet, no child to play—to give  
A cultured joy to ones that live  
In common lodging house. To hear  
A sweet voice is to me more dear  
Than sound of organs, bands, or bells.  
Discordant bursts lead out soft swells  
Of instrumental harmony—  
Love's voice is from all discord free,  
Here darkly die, die darkly here,  
And lack e'en Friendship's common tear ;  
A wreck of men, one score and ten,  
And less thy hope than older men.



## AUTUMN

Autumn grows old : he, like some simple one,  
In Summer's castaway is strangely clad ;  
Such withered things the winds in frolic mad  
Shake from his feeble hand and forehead wan.

Autumn is sighing for his early gold,  
And in his tremble dropping his remains ;  
The brook talks more, as one bereft of brains,  
Who singeth loud, delirious with the cold.

O now with drowsy June one hour to be !  
Scarce waking strength to hear the hum of bees,  
Or cattle lowing under shady trees,  
Knee deep in waters loitering to the sea.

I would that drowsy June awhile were here,  
The amorous South wind carrying all the vale—  
Save that white lily true to star as pale,  
Whose secret day-dream Phoebus burns to hear.

## SLEEP

Life's angel half, sweet Sleep,  
When, like the mermaid, thou  
In all thy loveliness  
Dost rise from out the deep  
Where Life is foul to see—  
Men wake to scheme and sin,  
But thou dost keep them pure  
In that sweet hour with thee.

The flower upon the hill,  
Where caves and crags and peaks  
Carry the thunder on  
After the heavens are still,  
Knows thee : as that cared flower  
Within some sheltering wood,  
And houses built by men,  
And in my lady's bower.

If Age hath followed Truth,  
A conscience clean and pure  
Is unto him as is  
Sweet Innocence to Youth ;  
But Age and Innocence  
Dost thou, sweet Sleep, reward :  
Thou givest rest to both,  
To both art recompense.

Yet thou hast awful power  
When thou art lying still  
And breathing quietly !  
Was it not such an hour  
Dark Murder slunk away,  
Fearing thy innocence  
More than the watchfulness  
Of men in armed array ?

Thou makest War to cease  
Awhile, and armies pause ;  
And in the midst of strife  
Thou bringest them to peace ;  
The tyrant must delay  
The cruel deed at thy command ;  
Oppressed ones know thy balm  
Can take their fears away.

## DEATH

Beauty'll be no fairer than  
Agèd dame so shrunk and wan,  
Whom she looks on proudly. Now,  
Did Death strike them sudden low,  
Strike them down, a little while  
Vanished Beauty's velvet smile,  
Ugly grinner she, and few  
Mark the difference 'tween these two.  
Nothing here shall arbitrate,  
Chivalry intimidate,  
Hour of doom, or change Death's laws ;  
Kings hire no ambassadors.  
Death makes monarchs grinning clowns,  
Fits their skulls for bells, not crowns.



## BEAUTY'S LIGHT

Think not her face is patched with pink,  
Or is a jumbled mess to seem,  
As berries red, that neither sink  
Nor swim in shallows of pale cream—  
Oh, no! her face it is not white,  
Nor red, nor brown, nor dark, nor fair,  
Nor yellow sure, though all the light  
Of gold and yellow flower meets there;  
So radiant is my loved one's face  
There's not one colour there to trace.

I know not where the light turns on:  
Whether that wondrous ball of hair  
And golden fire reflects upon  
Her cheeks, creating sunbeams there,  
I cannot tell; but it is sweet  
Back of that column white as snow  
To let my fingers link and meet  
Under her hair falls, and to know  
Her mine; where it feels warm; a nest  
Just emptied by the birds at rest.

A thousand sunbeams on each cheek  
Are crowding eager to o'erleap  
Her blue eye's fence rails, where they seek  
To drown themselves in pools so deep;

xxx.

And leapt them seems that many have,  
Yet, strange to say, not one could drown,  
But may be seen afloat the wave,  
Bobbing their bodies up and down ;  
And not a beam that leapt the fence  
Lost its soul's light in consequence.

## LINES TO A SPARROW

What shall we call thee—mouse o' the air,  
To raid our buds, make our trees bare,  
To rob the sunlight of its grain,  
More mischievous than April's rain ;  
To rob our orchards, and to knock  
Young blossoms down, to spoil and pock  
Nature's fair face, in spite and wrath—  
As he, thy brother of the earth,  
Who creeps at night time slyly forth  
To tear our satins, silks, and what  
He cannot munch makes wanton rot ?  
Nay, not like him art thou, for he  
Doth from his own poor shadow flee,  
And is a fearsome wretch, to show  
A guilt his conscience should not know ;  
And so ridiculous his fear  
That Innocence, without a tear  
Delights to prison him ; but thou  
Art guiltier than we will allow.  
It is in wintry weather when  
The robin turns a beggar, then  
Jays, pigeons, steal the squirrel's store ;  
But, when the winter's stress is o'er,  
They are dishonourable no more—  
Yet thou art thief, despoiler ever,  
xxxii.

Through sunny and through stormy weather.  
Time was thou didst perform great work,  
And slay slugs, bugs, and things that lurk  
In pioneer's path ; of late  
Thou hast incurred our mortal hate,  
And we would hunt thee out of life—  
Were't not for such unequal strife ;  
Our gins and traps, we must confess,  
Are vain, and powder powerless ;  
And all our cunning arts are vain,  
The triumph thine, and ours the pain.  
Man cannot shake thee off : as though  
A billow reared and plunged to throw  
The wind that on its archèd crest  
Jockeyed from shore to shore, and rest  
Not for a moment gave—e'en so  
Thy triumph none can overthrow.  
With all this fuss of thee, I doubt  
Thou art all bad, as men make out ;  
Not Cocky Sparrow, nor Jim Mouse,  
O foolish man, that robs thy house :  
If thou wouldst know what takes thy feed,  
Set trap for hand of human greed ;  
'Tis not that sparrows, mice are sly—  
On men who govern men keep eye.  
Brown Sparrow, with us everywhere,



Go, multiply without a care :  
When larks sing over fields unroamed,  
And sealèd woods by night are stormed,  
Surrendering unto nightingales—  
When cuckoos call to hills from vales,  
Thou, Sparrow mine, art here and near,  
To find all times, come year, go year.

## A DRINKING SONG

A Bee goes mumbling homeward pleased,  
He has not slaved away his hours ;  
He's drunken with a thousand healths  
Of love and kind regard for flowers.  
Pour out the wine,  
His joy be mine.

Forgetful of affairs at home,  
He has sipped oft and merrily ;  
Forgetful of his duty—Oh !  
What can he say to his queen bee ?  
He says in wine,  
“ Boo to her shrine ! ”

The coward dog that wags his tail,  
And rubs the nose with mangy curs,  
And fearful says, “ Come play, not fight,”  
Knows not the draught to drown his fears ;  
Knows not the wine,  
The ruby shine.

Poor beggar, breathless in yon barn,  
Who fears a mouse to move thy straw,  
Must Conscience pester thee all night,  
And fear oppress with thoughts of law ?  
O dearth of wine,  
No sleep is thine.

Is Bacchus not the god of gods,  
Who gives to Beauty's cheeks their shine ?  
O Love, thou art a wingless worm ;  
Wouldst thou be winged, fill thee with wine ;  
Fill thee with wine,  
And wings be thine.

Then, Bacchus, rule thy merry race,  
And laws like thine who would not keep ?  
And when fools weep to hear us laugh,  
We'll laugh, ha ! ha ! to see them weep.  
O god of wine,  
My soul be thine.

## LOVE ABSENT

Where wert thou, love, when from Twm Barlum turned  
The moon's face full the way of Alteryu,  
And from his wood's dark cage the nightingale  
Drave out clear notes across the open sheen ?

I stood alone to see the ripples run  
From light to shade, and shade to light in play ;  
Like fearsome children stealing guilty moves  
When Age is dozing—when thou wert away.

The banks of Alteryu are no less sweet,  
Nor Malpas brook more chary of his flowers,  
And I unchanged as they ; but thou, dear love,  
Allowest Time to part us with his hours.



# THE PROVER

If Life gives friends,  
'Tis Death that keeps them true :  
When living long  
Time proves them false and few ;  
So Life's a boon  
When Death is coming soon.

Life has no joy  
Except we cherish some  
Illusive dream :  
If Wisdom come,  
Life were no boon—  
Did Death not come more soon.

I loved a maid  
Time has proved false to be ;  
Would Death had come  
When true that maid to me !  
Life were a boon  
Had Death been coming soon.

## SAINTS AND LODGERS

Ye saints, that sing in rooms above,  
Do ye want souls to consecrate ?  
Here's " Boosy " Bob, " Pease Pudding " Joe,  
And " Fishy Fat," of Billingsgate.

Such language only they can speak,  
It juggles heaven and hell together ;  
One threatens, with a fearful oath,  
To slit a nose like a pig's trotter.

Here's sporting Fred, swears he is robbed,  
And out of fifteen shillings done  
By his own pal, who would not lend  
Sixpence to back a horse that won.

Here's Davie, he's so used to drink,  
When sober he is most bemuddled ;  
He steers his craft with better skill,  
And grows quite sly when he is fuddled.

Here's " Brummy " Tom, a little man,  
Who proudly throws his weight in drink ;  
He knows men think him poor when sober,  
And then, ashamed, to bed doth slink.

The " Masher " who, by his kind deeds,  
The friendship of our house hath lost ;  
He lent out cash that's not repaid—  
They hate him worst who owe him most.

Here's "Irish" Tim, outspoken wretch,  
Insult him, he is thy staunch friend ;  
But say " Good morning," civil like,  
He'll damn thee then to thy life's end.

What use are friends if not to bear  
Our venom and malicious spleen !  
Which, on our life ! we dare not give  
To foes who'll question what we mean.

Come down, ye saints, to old " Barge " Bill,  
And make his wicked heart to quake,  
His stomach nothing can upset,  
He boils his tea an hour to make.

Ye saints above, come to these sinners :  
To " Sunny " James, and " Skilly " Bob,  
" The Major," " Dodger," " Tinker " George,  
And " Deafy," he's the lodgers' snob.

Here's " Yank," we call " All Legs and Wings,"  
He's so erratic in his motion ;  
And poor wee " Punch," a sickly man—  
He's worse when he hath ta'en his lotion.

" Haymaker " George, a pig for pickles,  
And " Brass " for old clay pipes swops new ;  
Here's " Balmy " Joe, he's cursèd clean,  
Sweeps beetles in one's mutton stew.

"Australian " Bill, ta'en sick away,  
Came home to find his wife hath slid  
To other arms ; he's done with Liz,  
But in his heart he wants the kid.

Here's Jack, so mean he begs from beggars,  
Who make scant living door to door ;  
Here's " Slim," a quiet man awake,  
Whose sleep's a twenty-horse-power snore.

Here's " Sailor," pacing to and fro,  
Twice on his four hours' watch to see ;  
Ten paces forward, ten go aft—  
A silent man and mystery.

" The Watchman " takes twelve naps a day  
And at each wake his mouth is foul ;  
When he shall wake from his last sleep  
He'll have good cause to curse his soul.

Here's gentle Will, who knows most things,  
Throws light on Egypt and the Nile—  
And many more to consecrate,  
If, Christian folk, ye think worth while.

Toy-sellers, fish-men, paper-men,  
A few work barges, few are cadgers ;  
Some make up flowers from wire and wool,  
Some pensions take—such are our lodgers.



## THE LODGING HOUSE FIRE

My birthday—yesterday,  
Its hours were twenty-four ;  
Four hours I lived lukewarm,  
And killed a score.

I woke eight times and rose,  
Came to our fire below,  
Then sat four hours and watched  
Its sullen glow.

Then out four hours I walked,  
The lukewarm four I live,  
And felt no other joy  
Than air can give.

My mind durst know no thought,  
It knew my life too well :  
'Twas hell before, behind,  
And round me hell.

Back to that fire again,  
Ten hours I watch it now,  
And take to bed dim eyes  
And fever's brow.

Ten hours I give to sleep,  
More than my need, I know ;  
But I escape my mind  
And that fire's glow.

For listen : it is death  
To watch that fire's glow ;  
For, as it burns more red  
Men paler grow.

O better in foul room  
That's warm, make life away,  
Than homeless out of doors,  
Cold night and day.

Pile on the coke, make fire,  
Rouse its death-dealing glow ;  
Men are borne dead away  
Ere they can know.

I lie ; I cannot watch  
Its glare from hour to hour ;  
It makes one sleep, to wake  
Out of my power.

I close my eyes and swear  
It shall not wield its power ;  
No use, I wake to find  
A murdered hour.

Lying between us there !  
That fire drowsed me deep,  
And I wrought murder's deed—  
Did it in sleep.

I count us, thirty men,  
Huddled from Winter's blow,  
Helpless to move away  
From that fire's glow.

So goes my life each day—  
Its hours are twenty-four—  
Four hours I live lukewarm,  
And kill a score.

No man lives life so wise  
But unto Time he throws  
Morsels to hunger for  
At his life's close.

Were all such morsels heaped—  
Time greedily devours,  
When man sits still—he'd mourn  
So few wise hours.

But all my day is waste,  
I live a lukewarm four  
And make a red coke fire  
Poison the score.

## THE HILL-SIDE PARK

Some banks cropped close, and lawns smooth mown and  
green,

Where, when a daisy's guiltless face was seen,  
Its pretty head came sacrifice to pride  
Of human taste—I saw upon the side  
Of a steep hill. Without a branch of wood  
Plants, giant-leaved, like boneless bodies stood.  
The flowers had colonies, not one was seen  
To go astray from its allotted green,  
But to the light like mermaids' faces came  
From waves of green, and scarce two greens the same.  
And everywhere man's ingenuity  
On fence and bordering : for I could see  
The tiny scaffolding to hold the heads  
And faces overgrown of flowers in beds  
On which their weak-developed frames must fall,  
Had they not such support upright and tall.  
There was a fountain, and its waters' leap  
Was under a full-quivered Cupid's keep.  
And from his mother's lip the spray was blown  
Upon adjusted rock, selected stone ;  
And so was placed that all the waters fell  
Into a small ravine in a small dell,  
And made a stream, where that wee river raved,  
As gold his rocks and margent amber paved.

This park, it was a miracle of care,  
But sweeter far to me the prospects there :  
The far beyond, where lived Romance near seas  
And pools in haze, and in far realms of trees.  
I saw where Severn had run wide and free,  
Out where the Holms lie flat upon a sea  
Whose wrinkles wizard Distance smoothed away,  
And still sails flecked its face of silver-grey.











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Davies, William Henry  
The soul's destroyer

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